

VZCZCXRO0417  
RR RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHGH RUEHHM RUEHNN RUEHVC  
DE RUEHBK #6095/01 2780814  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 050814Z OCT 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2094  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 6117  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4138  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2171  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 8372  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEKJCS/DOD WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 006095

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS, EAP/CM  
PACOM FOR FPA HUSO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [TH](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: THAILAND: CHINESE REACTION TO THE COUP

Classified By: Charge Alexander A. Arvizu. Reason 1.4 (a and d)

11. (C) Summary. Although surprised by the coup, Chinese Embassy officials in Bangkok are confident that Sino-Thai relations will continue to thrive under the new Thai government and see opportunities for expanding influence while the United States imposes sanctions. Likely Chinese responses to the coup will include stronger military training programs and public signals of support from Politburo members. The Thai media has given wide coverage to Wen Jiabao's letter to the MFA which states that the "traditional friendship between China and Thailand dates back to ancient times" and the two people "are like each other's relatives with friendly feelings." They are contrasting this response to our condemnation of the coup. End Summary.

CAUGHT OFF GUARD BUT CONFIDENT OF CONTINUING INFLUENCE

12. (C) Officials at the PRC Embassy in Bangkok were surprised by the coup. Political Counselor Jiang Yili and Political Officers Wang Shuai and Zhang Ying confessed that their reporting to Beijing in the weeks before September 19 had predicted a coup was unlikely. Working through the night of September 19, Jiang and Wang said that their initial focus, after reporting on breaking events, was to provide analysis to Beijing on whether China's close relationship with deposed PM Thaksin Shinawatra would hurt bilateral relations. They advised Beijing that China's influence in Thailand remains strong for a variety of reasons: growing commercial links, cultural ties, collegial diplomatic relations, and growing military cooperation programs and urged Beijing to focus on protecting its interests. Jiang maintained that the large number of Sino-Thai in business, the media and the Thai government who want to cultivate good relations with Beijing would continue to ensure strong relations. Zhang made special mention of the PRC's relationship with Princess Sirindhorn, a Mandarin speaker who frequently visits China, calling her "our special Ambassador in Thailand."

DAMAGED REPUTATION AND DAMAGE CONTROL

13. (C) The Chinese Embassy's failure to predict the coup may have damaged the reputation of Ambassador Zhang Jiuhan, however. The Guangming Daily reporter in Bangkok, Li Teng (aka Terry Lee), told PolOff that he had been summoned back

to Beijing on October 7 to brief officials on the coup. When asked why he, and not the Chinese Ambassador, was briefing officials, Li explained that Ambassador Zhang and DCM Pan Guangxue had lost credibility with the Chinese leadership for failing to predict the coup. Our Thai MFA colleagues tell us that Zhang is working hard to remedy the situation. They report that Chinese Embassy sources were chagrined to find out that the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand had met Prime Minister Surayud on his first day in office and immediately asked Government House for an audience. A Thai MFA official also told us that Surayud initially did not want to meet with any Ambassadors except ours until he had a Cabinet in place but was persuaded by key aides to see Ambassador Zhang in the coming days. If the meeting goes off as planned, Zhang would be the second Ambassador to meet with Prime Minister Surayud. We have also heard that a joint meeting of ASEAN envoys based in Bangkok with Surayud may be in the works soon.

#### MILITARY OPPORTUNITIES

14. (C) Several times in recent months, PRC Defense Attache Major General An Zuoshan has told us that the PLA wants to develop a more open relationship with the Thai armed forces to include more regular high level military talks, more Thai students at the PLA Command and General Staff College, a better international military education and training program, and subject matter expert exchanges. After the coup, PRC Army Attache Senior Colonel Li Mingliang told our DATT that his office looks at U.S. military sanctions as an opportunity to expand influence. Li confidently expressed hope that his approach of telling the Thai that "China is your neighbor, we will be here long-term, we will not interfere in your internal affairs," will give him a leg up on his American counterparts.

BANGKOK 00006095 002 OF 002

#### COMMENT: DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY

15. (C) It appears the PRC diplomatic strategy will take a similar approach. On September 26, Political Officer Wang Shuai told PolOff that, although no firm decision had been made at that time whether China would support the new Government, his Embassy had urged Beijing to make a quick show of support if the new Government appeared legitimate. Wen Jiabao's letter appears to indicate Beijing agreed with the suggestion. The headline on the front page of the October 5 Nation newspaper reads "US, CHINA DIFFER ON COUP" and contrasts our concerns about martial law and respect for democratic norms with PRC Premier Wen Jiabao's paean of support.  
ARVIZU